

SAMUEL WHITE BAKER

IN THE HEART OF AFRICA

Samuel White Baker
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Sir Samuel White Baker

In the Heart of Africa

CHAPTER I

The Nubian desert—The bitter well—Change of plans—An irascible dragoman—Pools of the Atbara—One secret of the Nile—At Cassala.

In March, 1861, I commenced an expedition to discover the sources of the Nile, with the hope of meeting the East African expedition of Captains Speke and Grant, that had been sent by the English Government from the South via Zanzibar, for the same object. I had not the presumption to publish my intention, as the sources of the Nile had hitherto defied all explorers, but I had inwardly determined to accomplish this difficult task or to die in the attempt. From my youth I had been inured to hardships and endurance in wild sports in tropical climates, and when I gazed upon the map of Africa I had a wild hope, mingled with humility, that, even as the insignificant worm bores through the hardest oak, I might by perseverance reach the heart of Africa.

I could not conceive that anything in this world has power to resist a determined will, so long as health and life remain. The failure of every former attempt to reach the Nile source did not astonish me, as the expeditions had consisted of parties, which, when difficulties occur, generally end in difference of opinion and in retreat; I therefore determined to proceed alone, trusting in the guidance of a Divine Providence and the good fortune that sometimes attends a tenacity of purpose. I weighed carefully the chances of the undertaking. Before me, untrodden Africa; against me, the obstacles that had defeated the world since its creation; on my side, a somewhat tough constitution, perfect independence, a long experience in savage life, and both time and means, which I intended to devote to the object without limit.

England had never sent an expedition to the Nile sources previous to that under the command of Speke and Grant. Bruce, ninety years before, had succeeded in tracing the source of the Blue or Lesser Nile; thus the honor of that discovery belonged to Great Britain. Speke was on his road from the South, and I felt confident that my gallant friend would leave his bones upon the path rather than submit to failure. I trusted that England would not be beaten, and although I hardly dared to hope that I could succeed where others greater than I had failed, I determined to sacrifice all in the attempt.

Had I been alone, it would have been no hard lot to die upon the untrodden path before me; but there was one who, although my greatest comfort, was also my greatest care, one whose life yet dawned at so early an age that womanhood was still a future. I shuddered at the prospect for her, should she be left alone in savage lands at my death; and gladly would I have left her in the luxuries of home instead of exposing her to the miseries of Africa. It was in vain that I implored her to remain, and that I painted the difficulties and perils still blacker than I supposed they really would be. She was resolved, with woman's constancy and devotion, to share all dangers and to follow me through each rough footstep of the wild life before me. "And Ruth said, Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee; for whither thou goest I will go, and where thou lodgest I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God; where thou diest will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me."

Thus accompanied by my wife, on the 15th of April, 1861, I sailed up the Nile from Cairo. The wind blew fair and strong from the north, and we flew toward the south against the stream, watching those mysterious waters with a firm resolve to track them to their distant fountain.

I had a firman from the Viceroy, a cook, and a dragoman. Thus my impedimenta were not numerous. The firman was an order to all Egyptian officials for assistance; the cook was dirty and

incapable; and the interpreter was nearly ignorant of English, although a professed polyglot. With this small beginning, Africa was before me, and thus I commenced the search for the sources of the Nile.

On arrival at Korosko, twenty-six days from Cairo, we started across the Nubian Desert. During the cool months, from November until February, the desert journey is not disagreeable; but the vast area of glowing sand exposed to the scorching sun of summer, in addition to the withering breath of the simoom, renders the forced march of two hundred and thirty miles in seven days, at two and a half miles per hour, one of the most fatiguing journeys that can be endured.

We entered a dead level plain of orange-colored sand, surrounded by pyramidal hills. The surface was strewn with objects resembling cannon shot and grape of all sizes from a 32-pounder downward, and looked like the old battle-field of some infernal region—rocks glowing with heat, not a vestige of vegetation, barren, withering desolation. The slow rocking step of the camels was most irksome, and, despite the heat, I dismounted to examine the Satanic bombs and cannon shot. Many of them were as perfectly round as though cast in a mould, others were egg-shaped, and all were hollow. With some difficulty I broke them, and found them to contain a bright red sand. They were, in fact, volcanic bombs that had been formed by the ejection of molten lava to a great height from active volcanoes; these had become globular in falling, and, having cooled before they reached the earth, they retained their forms as hard spherical bodies, precisely resembling cannon shot. The exterior was brown, and appeared to be rich in iron. The smaller specimens were the more perfect spheres, as they cooled quickly; but many of the heavier masses had evidently reached the earth when only half solidified, and had collapsed upon falling. The sandy plain was covered with such vestiges of volcanic action, and the infernal bombs lay as imperishable relics of a hailstorm such as may have destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.

Passing through this wretched solitude, we entered upon a scene of surpassing desolation. Far as the eye could reach were waves like a stormy sea, gray, cold-looking waves in the burning heat; but no drop of water. It appeared as though a sudden curse had turned a raging sea to stone. The simoom blew over this horrible wilderness, and drifted the hot sand into the crevices of the rocks, and the camels drooped their heads before the suffocating wind; but still the caravan noiselessly crept along over the rocky undulations, until the stormy sea was passed; once more we were upon a boundless plain of sand and pebbles.

In forty-six hours and forty-five minutes' actual marching from Korosko, we reached Moorahd, "the bitter well." This is a mournful spot, well known to the tired and thirsty camel, the hope of reaching which has urged him fainting on his weary way to drink one draught before he dies. This is the camel's grave. Situated half way between Korosko and Abou Hammed, the well of Moorahd is in an extinct crater, surrounded upon all sides but one by precipitous cliffs about three hundred feet high. The bottom is a dead flat, and forms a valley of sand about two hundred and fifty yards wide. In this bosom of a crater, salt and bitter water is found at a depth of only six feet from the surface. To this our tired camels frantically rushed upon being unloaded.

The valley was a "valley of dry bones." Innumerable skeletons of camels lay in all directions—the ships of the desert thus stranded on their voyage. Withered heaps of parched skin and bone lay here and there, in the distinct forms in which the camels had gasped their last. The dry desert air had converted the hide into a coffin. There were no flies here, thus there were no worms to devour the carcasses; but the usual sextons were the crows, although sometimes too few to perform their office. These were perched upon the overhanging cliffs; but no sooner had our overworked camels taken their long draught and lain down exhausted on the sand, than by common consent they descended from their high places and walked round and round each tired beast.

As many wretched animals simply crawl to this spot to die, the crows, from long experience and constant practice, can form a pretty correct diagnosis upon the case of a sick camel. They had evidently paid a professional visit to my caravan, and were especially attentive in studying the case

of one particular camel that was in a very weakly condition and had stretched itself full length upon the sand; nor would they leave it until it was driven forward.

Many years ago, when the Egyptian troops first conquered Nubia, a regiment was destroyed by thirst in crossing this desert. The men, being upon a limited allowance of water, suffered from extreme thirst, and deceived by the appearance of a mirage that exactly resembled a beautiful lake, they insisted on being taken to its banks by the Arab guide. It was in vain that the guide assured them that the lake was unreal, and he refused to lose the precious time by wandering from his course. Words led to blows, and he was killed by the soldiers, whose lives depended upon his guidance. The whole regiment turned from the track and rushed toward the welcome waters. Thirsty and faint, over the burning sands they hurried; heavier and heavier their footsteps became; hotter and hotter their breath, as deeper they pushed into the desert, farther and farther from the lost track where the pilot lay in his blood; and still the mocking spirits of the desert, the afreets of the mirage, led them on, and the hike glistening in the sunshine tempted them to bathe in its cool waters, close to their eyes, but never at their lips. At length the delusion vanished—the fatal lake had turned to burning sand! Raging thirst and horrible despair! the pathless desert and the murdered guide! lost! lost! all lost! Not a man ever left the desert, but they were subsequently discovered, parched and withered corpses, by the Arabs sent upon the search.

During our march the simoom was fearful, and the heat so intense that it was impossible to draw the guncases out of their leather covers, which it was necessary to cut open. All woodwork was warped; ivory knife-handles were split; paper broke when crunched in the hand, and the very marrow seemed to be dried out of the bones. The extreme dryness of the air induced an extraordinary amount of electricity in the hair and in all woollen materials. A Scotch plaid laid upon a blanket for a few hours adhered to it, and upon being withdrawn at night a sheet of flame was produced, accompanied by tolerably loud reports.

We reached Berber on May 31st, and spent a week in resting after our formidable desert march of fifteen days. From the slight experience I had gained in the journey, I felt convinced that success in my Nile expedition would be impossible without a knowledge of Arabic. My dragoman had me completely in his power, and I resolved to become independent of all interpreters as soon as possible. I therefore arranged a plan of exploration for the first year, to embrace the affluents to the Nile from the Abyssinian range of mountains, intending to follow up the Atbara River from its junction with the Nile in latitude 17 deg. 37 min. (twenty miles south of Berber), and to examine all the Nile tributaries from the southeast as far as the Blue Nile, which river I hoped ultimately to descend to Khartoum. I imagined that twelve months would be sufficient to complete such an exploration, by which time I should have gained a sufficient knowledge of the Arabic to render me able to converse fairly well.

The wind at this season (June) was changeable, and strong blasts from the south were the harbingers of the approaching rainy season. We had no time to lose, and we accordingly arranged to start. I discharged my dirty cook, and engaged a man who was brought by a coffeehouse keeper, by whom he was highly recommended; but, as a precaution against deception, I led him before the Mudir, or Governor, to be registered before our departure. To my astonishment, and to his infinite disgust, he was immediately recognized as an old offender, who had formerly been imprisoned for theft! The Governor, to prove his friendship and his interest in my welfare, immediately sent the police to capture the coffee-house keeper who had recommended the cook. No sooner was the unlucky surety brought to the Divan than he was condemned to receive two hundred lashes for having given a false character. The sentence was literally carried out, in spite of my remonstrance, and the police were ordered to make the case public to prevent a recurrence. The Governor assured me that, as I held a firman from the Viceroy, he could not do otherwise, and that I must believe him to be my truest friend. "Save me from my friends," was an adage quickly proved. I could not procure a cook nor any other attendant, as every one was afraid to guarantee a character, lest he might come in for his share of the two hundred lashes!

The Governor came to my rescue, and sent immediately the promised Turkish soldiers, who were to act in the double capacity of escort and servants. They were men of totally opposite characters. Hadji Achmet was a hardy, powerful, dare-devil-looking Turk, while Hadji Velli was the perfection of politeness, and as gentle as a lamb. My new allies procured me three donkeys in addition to the necessary baggage camels, and we started from Berber on the evening of the 10th of June for the junction of the Atbara River With the Nile.

Mahomet, Achmet, and Ali are equivalent to Smith, Brown, and Thompson. Accordingly, of my few attendants, my dragoman was Mahomet, and my principal guide was Achmet, and subsequently I had a number of Alis. Mahomet was a regular Cairo dragoman, a native of Dongola, almost black, but exceedingly tenacious regarding his shade of color, which he declared to be light brown. He spoke very bad English, was excessively conceited, and irascible to a degree. He was one of those dragomans who are accustomed to the civilized expeditions of the British tourist to the first or second cataract, in a Nile boat replete with conveniences and luxuries, upon which the dragoman is monarch supreme, a whale among the minnows, who rules the vessel, purchases daily a host of unnecessary supplies, upon which he clears his profit, until he returns to Cairo with his pockets filled sufficiently to support him until the following Nile season. The short three months' harvest, from November until February, fills his granary for the year. Under such circumstances the temper should be angelic.

But times had changed. To Mahomet the very idea of exploration was an absurdity. He had never believed in it from the first, and he now became impressed with the fact that he was positively committed to an undertaking that would end most likely in his death, if not in terrible difficulties; he determined, under the circumstances, to make himself as disagreeable as possible to all parties. With this amiable resolution he adopted a physical infirmity in the shape of deafness. In reality, no one was more acute in hearing, but as there are no bells where there are no houses, he of course could not answer such a summons, and he was compelled to attend to the call of his own name—"Mahomet! Mahomet!" No reply, although the individual were sitting within a few feet, apparently absorbed in the contemplation of his own boots. "MaHOMet!" with an additional emphasis upon the second syllable. Again no response. "Mahomet, you rascal, why don't you answer?" This energetic address would effect a change in his position. The mild and lamb-like dragoman of Cairo would suddenly start from the ground, tear his own hair from his head in handfuls, and shout, "Mahomet! Mahomet! Mahomet! always Mahomet! D—n Mahomet! I wish he were dead, or back in Cairo, this brute Mahomet!" The irascible dragoman would then beat his own head unmercifully with his fists, in a paroxysm of rage.

To comfort him I could only exclaim, "Well done, Mahomet! thrash him; pommel him well; punch his head; you know him best; he deserves it; don't spare him!" This advice, acting upon the natural perversity of his disposition, generally soothed him, and he ceased punching his head. This man was entirely out of his place, if not out of his mind, at certain moments, and having upon one occasion smashed a basin by throwing it in the face of the cook, and upon another occasion narrowly escaped homicide by throwing an axe at a man's head, which missed by an inch, he became a notorious character in the little expedition.

We left Berber in the evening, and about two hours after sunset of the following day reached the junction of the Nile and Atbara. The latter presented a curious appearance. In no place was it less than four hundred yards in width, and in many places much wider. The banks were from twenty-five to thirty feet deep, and had evidently been overflowed during floods; but now the river bed was dry sand, so glaring that the sun's reflection was almost intolerable. The only shade was afforded by the evergreen dome palms; nevertheless the Arabs occupied the banks at intervals of three or four miles, wherever a pool of water in some deep bend of the dried river's bed offered an attraction. In such places were Arab villages or camps, of the usual mat tents formed of the dome-palm leaves.

Many pools were of considerable size and of great depth. In flood-time a tremendous torrent sweeps down the course of the Atbara, and the sudden bends of the river are hollowed out by the force of the stream to a depth of twenty or thirty feet below the level of the bed. Accordingly these

holes become reservoirs of water when the river is otherwise exhausted. In such asylums all the usual inhabitants of this large river are crowded together in a comparatively narrow space. Although these pools vary in size, from only a few hundred yards to a mile in length, they are positively full of life; huge fish, crocodiles of immense size, turtles, and occasionally hippopotami, consort together in close and unwished-for proximity. The animals of the desert—gazelles, hyenas, and wild asses—are compelled to resort to these crowded drinking-places, occupied by the flocks of the Arabs equally with the timid beasts of the chase. The birds that during the cooler months would wander free throughout the country are now collected in vast numbers along the margin of the exhausted river; innumerable doves, varying in species, throng the trees and seek the shade of the dome-palms; thousands of desert grouse arrive morning and evening to drink and to depart; while birds in multitudes, of lovely plumage, escape from the burning desert and colonize the poor but welcome bushes that fringe the Atbara River.

After several days' journey along the bank of the Atbara we halted at a spot called Collodabad, about one hundred and sixty miles from the Nile junction. A sharp bend of the river had left a deep pool about a mile in length, and here a number of Arabs were congregated, with their flocks and herds.

On the evening of June 23d I was lying half asleep upon my bed by the margin of the river, when I fancied that I heard a rumbling like distant thunder. I had not heard such a sound for months, but a low, uninterrupted roll appeared to increase in volume, although far distant. Hardly had I raised my head to listen more attentively when a confusion of voices arose from the Arabs' camp, with a sound of many feet, and in a few minutes they rushed into my camp, shouting to my men in the darkness, "El Bahr! El Bahr!" (the river! the river!)

We were up in an instant, and my interpreter, Mahomet, in a state of intense confusion, explained that the river was coming down, and that the supposed distant thunder was the roar of approaching water.

Many of the people were asleep on the clean sand on the river's bed; these were quickly awakened by the Arabs, who rushed down the steep bank to save the skulls of two hippopotami that were exposed to dry. Hardly had they descended when the sound of the river in the darkness beneath told us that the water had arrived, and the men, dripping with wet, had just sufficient time to drag their heavy burdens up the bank.

All was darkness and confusion, everybody talking and no one listening; but the great event had occurred; the river had arrived "like a thief in the night". On the morning of the 24th of June, I stood on the banks of the noble Atbara River at the break of day. The wonder of the desert! Yesterday there was a barren sheet of glaring sand, with a fringe of withered bushes and trees upon its borders, that cut the yellow expanse of desert. For days we had journeyed along the exhausted bed; all Nature, even in Nature's poverty, was most poor: no bush could boast a leaf, no tree could throw a shade, crisp gums crackled upon the stems of the mimosas, the sap dried upon the burst bark, sprung with the withering heat of the simoom. In one night there was a mysterious change. Wonders of the mighty Nile! An army of water was hastening to the wasted river. There was no drop of rain, no thunder-cloud on the horizon to give hope. All had been dry and sultry, dust and desolation yesterday; to-day a magnificent stream, some five hundred yards in width and from fifteen to twenty feet in depth, flowed through the dreary desert! Bamboos and reeds, with trash of all kinds, were hurried along the muddy waters. Where were all the crowded inhabitants of the pool? The prison doors were broken, the prisoners were released, and rejoiced in the mighty stream of the Atbara.

The 24th of June, 1861, was a memorable day. Although this was actually the beginning of my work, I felt that by the experience of this night I had obtained a clew to one portion of the Nile mystery, and that, as "coming events cast their shadows before," this sudden creation of a river was but the shadow of the great cause. The rains were pouring in Abyssinia! THESE WERE SOURCES OF THE NILE!

The journey along the margin of the Atbara was similar to the route from Berber, through a vast desert, with a narrow band of trees that marked the course of the river. The only change was the magical growth of the leaves, which burst hourly from the swollen buds of the mimosas. This could be accounted for by the sudden arrival of the river, as the water percolated rapidly through the sand and nourished the famishing roots.

At Gozerajup, two hundred and forty-six miles from Berber, our route was changed. We had hitherto followed the course of the Atbara, but we were now to leave that river on our right, while we travelled about ninety miles south-east to Cassala, the capital of the Taka country, on the confines of Abyssinia, and the great depot for Egyptian troops.

The entire country from Gozerajup to Cassala is a dead flat, upon which there is not one tree sufficiently large to shade a full-sized tent. There is no real timber in the country; but the vast level extent of soil is a series of open plains and low bush of thorny mimosa. There is no drainage upon this perfect level; thus, during the rainy season, the soakage actually melts the soil, and forms deep holes throughout the country, which then becomes an impenetrable slough, bearing grass and jungle. No sooner had we arrived in the flooded country than my wife was seized with a sudden and severe fever, which necessitated a halt upon the march, as she could no longer sit upon her camel. In the evening several hundreds of Arabs arrived and encamped around our fire. It was shortly after sunset, and it was interesting to watch the extreme rapidity with which these swarthy sons of the desert pitched their camp. A hundred fires were quickly blazing; the women prepared the food, and children sat in clusters around the blaze, as all were wet from paddling through the puddled ground from which they were retreating.

No sooner was the bustle of arrangement completed than a gray old man stepped forward, and, responding to his call, every man of the hundreds present formed in line, three or four deep. At once there was total silence, disturbed only by the crackling of the fires or by the cry of a child; and with faces turned to the east, in attitudes of profound devotion, the wild but fervent followers of Mahomet repeated their evening prayer. The flickering red light of the fires illumined the bronze faces of the congregation, and as I stood before the front line of devotees, I took off my cap in respect for their faith, and at the close of their prayer made my salaam to their venerable Faky (priest); he returned the salutation with the cold dignity of an Arab.

On the next day my wife's fever was renewed, but she was placed on a dromedary and we reached Cassala about sunset. The place is rich in hyenas, and the night was passed in the discordant howling of these disgusting but useful animals. They are the scavengers of the country, devouring every species of filth and clearing all carrion from the earth. Without the hyenas and vultures the neighborhood of a Nubian village would be unbearable. It is the idle custom of the people to leave unburied all animals that die; thus, among the numerous flocks and herds, the casualties would create a pestilence were it not for the birds and beasts of prey.

On the following morning the fever had yielded to quinine, and we were enabled to receive a round of visits—the governor and suite, Elias Bey, the doctor and a friend, and, lastly, Malem Georgis, an elderly Greek merchant, who, with great hospitality, insisted upon our quitting the sultry tent and sharing his own roof. We therefore became his guests in a most comfortable house for some days. Here we discharged our camels, as our Turk, Hadji Achmet's, service ended at this point, and proceeded to start afresh for the Nile tributaries of Abyssinia.

CHAPTER II

Egypt's rule of the Soudan—Corn-grinding in the Soudan—Mahomet meets relatives—The parent of Egypt—El Baggar rides the camel.

Cassala was built about twenty years before I visited the country, after Taka had been conquered and annexed to Egypt. The general annexation of the Soudan and the submission of the numerous Arab tribes to the Viceroy have been the first steps necessary to the improvement of the country. Although the Egyptians are hard masters, and do not trouble themselves about the future well-being of the conquered races, it must be remembered that, prior to the annexation, all the tribes were at war among themselves. There was neither government nor law; thus the whole country was closed to Europeans. At the time of my visit to Cassala in 1861 the Arab tribes were separately governed by their own chiefs or sheiks, who were responsible to the Egyptian authorities for the taxes due from their people. Since that period the entire tribes of all denominations have been placed under the authority of that grand old Arab patriarch, Achmet Abou Sinn, to be hereafter mentioned. The iron hand of despotism has produced a marvellous change among the Arabs, who are rendered utterly powerless by the system of government adopted by the Egyptians; unfortunately, this harsh system has the effect of paralyzing all industry.

The principal object of Turks and Egyptians in annexation is to increase their power of taxation by gaining an additional number of subjects. Thus, although many advantages have accrued to the Arab provinces of Nubia through Egyptian rule, there exists very much mistrust between the governed and the governing. Not only are the camels, cattle, and sheep subjected to a tax, but every attempt at cultivation is thwarted by the authorities, who impose a fine or tax upon the superficial area of the cultivated land. Thus, no one will cultivate more than is absolutely necessary, as he dreads the difficulties that broad acres of waving crops would entail upon his family. The bona fide tax is a bagatelle to the amounts squeezed from him by the extortionate soldiery, who are the agents employed by the sheik; these must have their share of the plunder, in excess of the amount to be delivered to their employer; he also must have his plunder before he parts with the bags of dollars to the governor of the province. Thus the unfortunate cultivator is ground down. Should he refuse to pay the necessary "backsheesh" or present to the tax-collectors, some false charge is trumped up against him, and he is thrown into prison. As a green field is an attraction to a flight of locusts in their desolating voyage, so is a luxuriant farm in the Soudan a point for the tax-collectors of Upper Egypt. I have frequently ridden several days' journey through a succession of empty villages, deserted by the inhabitants upon the report of the soldiers' approach. The women and children, goats and cattle, camels and asses, had all been removed into the wilderness for refuge, while their crops of corn had been left standing for the plunderers, who would be too idle to reap and thrash the grain.

Notwithstanding the miserable that fetters the steps of improvement, Nature has bestowed such great capabilities of production in the fertile soil of this country that the yield of a small surface is more than sufficient for the requirements of the population, and actual poverty is unknown. The average price of dhurra is fifteen piastres per "rachel," or about 3s. 2d. for five hundred pounds upon the spot where it is grown. The dhurra (*Sorghum andropogon*) is the grain most commonly used throughout the Soudan; there are great varieties of this plant, of which the most common are the white and the red. The land is not only favored by Nature by its fertility, but the intense heat of the summer is the laborer's great assistant. As before described, all vegetation entirely disappears in the glaring sun, or becomes so dry that it is swept off by fire; thus the soil is perfectly clean and fit for immediate cultivation upon the arrival of the rains.

The tool generally used is similar to the Dutch hoe. With this simple implement the surface is scratched to the depth of about two inches, and the seeds of the dhurra are dibbled in about three feet apart, in rows from four to five feet in width. Two seeds are dropped into each hole. A few days after

the first shower they rise above the ground, and when about six inches high the whole population turn out of their villages at break of day to weed the dhurra fields. Sown in July, it is harvested in February and March. Eight months are thus required for the cultivation of this cereal in the intense heat of Nubia. For the first three months the growth is extremely rapid, and the stem attains a height of six or seven feet. When at perfection in the rich soil of the Taka country, the plant averages a height of ten feet, the circumference of the stem being about four inches. The crown is a feather very similar to that of the sugar-cane; the blossom falls, and the feather becomes a head of dhurra, weighing about two pounds. Each grain is about the size of hemp-seed. I took the trouble of counting the corns contained in an average-sized head, the result being 4,848. The process of harvesting and threshing is remarkably simple, as the heads are simply detached from the straw and beaten out in piles. The dried straw is a substitute for sticks in forming the walls of the village huts; these are plastered with clay and cow-dung, which form the Arab's lath and plaster.

The millers' work is exclusively the province of the women. No man will condescend to grind the corn. There are no circular hand-mills, as among Oriental nations; but the corn is ground upon a simple flat stone, of cithor gneiss or granite, about two feet in length by fourteen inches in width. The face of this is roughened by beating with a sharp-pointed piece of harder stone, such as quartz or hornblende, and the grain is reduced to flour by great labor and repeated grinding or rubbing with a stone rolling-pin. The flour is mixed with water and allowed to ferment; it is then made into thin pancakes upon an earthenware flat portable hearth. This species of leavened bread is known to the Arabs as the *kisra*. It is not very palatable, but it is extremely well suited to Arab cookery, as it can be rolled up like a pancake and dipped in the general dish of meat and gravy very conveniently, in the absence of spoons and forks.

On the 14th of July I had concluded my arrangements for the start. There had been some difficulty in procuring camels, but the all-powerful firman was a never-failing talisman, and as the Arabs had declined to let their animals for hire, the Governor despatched a number of soldiers and seized the required number, including their owners. I engaged two wild young Arabs of eighteen and twenty years of age, named Bacheet and Wat Gamma. The latter, being interpreted, signifies "Son of the Moon." This in no way suggests lunacy; but the young Arab had happened to enter this world on the day of the new moon, which was considered to be a particularly fortunate and brilliant omen at his birth. Whether the climax of his good fortune had arrived at the moment he entered my service I know not; but, if so, there was a cloud over his happiness in his subjection to Mahomet, the dragoman, who rejoiced in the opportunity of bullying the two inferiors. Wat Gamma was a quiet, steady, well-conducted lad, who bore oppression mildly; but the younger, Bacheet, was a fiery, wild young Arab, who, although an excellent boy in his peculiar way, was almost incapable of being tamed and domesticated. I at once perceived that Mahomet would have a determined rebel to control, which I confess I did not regret. Wages were not high in this part of the world—the lads were engaged at one and a half dollars per month and their keep.

Mahomet, who was a great man, suffered from the same complaint to which great men are (in those countries) particularly subject. Wherever he went he was attacked with claimants of relationship. He was overwhelmed with professions of friendship from people who claimed to be connections of some of his family. In fact, if all the ramifications of his race were correctly represented by the claimants of relationship, Mahomet's family tree would have shaded the Nubian desert.

We all have our foibles. The strongest fort has its feeble point, as the chain snaps at its weakest link. Family pride was Mahomet's weak link. This was his tender point; and Mahomet, the great and the imperious, yielded to the gentle scratching of his ear if a stranger claimed connection with his ancient lineage. Of course he had no family, with the exception of his wife and two children, whom he had left in Cairo. The lady whom he had honored by admission into the domestic circle of the Mahomets was suffering from a broken arm when we started from Egypt, as she had cooked

the dinner badly, and the "gaddah," or large wooden bowl, had been thrown at her by the naturally indignant husband, precisely as he had thrown the axe at one man and the basin at another while in our service. These were little contretemps that could hardly disturb the dignity of so great a man.

Mahomet met several relatives at Cassala. One borrowed money of him; another stole his pipe; the third, who declared that nothing should separate them now that "by the blessing of God" they had met, determined to accompany him through all the difficulties of our expedition, provided that Mahomet would only permit him to serve for love, without wages. I gave Mahomet some little advice upon this point, reminding him that, although the clothes of the party were only worth a few piastres, the spoons and forks were silver; therefore I should hold him responsible for the honesty of his friend. This reflection upon the family gave great offence, and he assured me that Achmet, our quondam acquaintance, was so near a relative that he was—I assisted him in the genealogical distinction: "Mother's brother's cousin's sister's mother's son? Eh, Mahomet?"

"Yes, sar, that's it!" "Very well, Mahomet; mind he doesn't steal the spoons, and thrash him if he doesn't do his work!" "Yes, sar", replied Mahomet; "he all same like one brother; he one good man; will do his business quietly; if not, master lick him." The new relative not understanding English, was perfectly satisfied with the success of his introduction, and from that moment he became one of the party.

One more addition, and our arrangements were completed: the Governor of Cassala was determined we should not start without a soldier guide to represent the government. Accordingly he gave us a black corporal, so renowned as a sportsman that he went by the name of "El Baggar" (the cow), because of his having killed several of the oryx antelope, known as "El Baggar et Wabash" (cow of the desert).

After sixteen hours' actual marching from Cassala we arrived at the valley of the Atbara. There was an extraordinary change in the appearance of the river between Gozerajup and this spot. There was no longer the vast sandy desert with the river flowing through its sterile course on a level with the surface of the country; but after traversing an apparently perfect flat of forty-five miles of rich alluvial soil, we had suddenly arrived upon the edge of a deep valley, between five and six miles wide, at the bottom of which, about two hundred feet below the general level of the country, flowed the river Atbara. On the opposite side of the valley the same vast table-lands continued to the western horizon.

We commenced the descent toward the river: the valley was a succession of gullies and ravines, of landslips and watercourses. The entire hollow, of miles in width, had evidently been the work of the river. How many ages had the rains and the stream been at work to scoop out from the flat tableland this deep and broad valley? Here was the giant laborer that had shovelled the rich loam upon the delta of Lower Egypt! Upon these vast flats of fertile soil there can be no drainage except through soakage. The deep valley is therefore the receptacle not only for the water that oozes from its sides, but subterranean channels, bursting as land-springs from all parts of the walls of the valley, wash down the more soluble portions of earth, and continually waste away the soil. Landslips occur daily during the rainy season; streams of rich mud pour down the valley's slopes, and as the river flows beneath in a swollen torrent, the friable banks topple down into the stream and dissolve. The Atbara becomes the thickness of peasoup, as its muddy waters steadily perform the duty they have fulfilled from age to age. Thus was the great river at work upon our arrival on its bank at the bottom of the valley. The Arab name, "Bahr el Aswat" (black river) was well bestowed; it was the black mother of Egypt, still carrying to her offspring the nourishment that had first formed the Delta.

At this point of interest the journey had commenced; the deserts were passed; all was fertility and life. Wherever the sources of the Nile might be, the Atbara was the parent of Egypt! This was my first impression, to be proved hereafter.

A violent thunderstorm, with a deluge of rain, broke upon our camp on the banks of the Atbara, fortunately just after the tents were pitched. We thus had an example of the extraordinary effects of the heavy rain in tearing away the soil of the valley. Trifling watercourses were swollen to torrents.

Banks of earth became loosened and fell in, and the rush of mud and water upon all sides swept forward into the river with a rapidity which threatened the destruction of the country, could such a tempest endure for a few days. In a couple of hours all was over.

In the evening we crossed with our baggage and people to the opposite side of the river, and pitched our tents at the village of Goorashee. In the morning the camels arrived, and once more we were ready to start. Our factotum, El Baggar, had collected a number of baggage-camels and riding dromedaries, or "hygeens". The latter he had brought for approval, as we had suffered much from the extreme roughness of our late camels. There is the same difference between a good hygeen, or dromedary, and a baggage-camel, as between the thoroughbred and the cart-horse; and it appears absurd in the eyes of the Arabs that a man of any position should ride a baggage-camel. Apart from all ideas of etiquette, the motion of the latter animal is quite sufficient warning. Of all species of fatigue, the back-breaking, monotonous swing of a heavy camel is the worst; and should the rider lose patience and administer a sharp cut with the coorbach, that induces the creature to break into a trot, the torture of the rack is a pleasant tickling compared to the sensation of having your spine driven by a sledge-hammer from below, half a foot deeper into the skull.

The human frame may be inured to almost anything; thus the Arabs, who have always been accustomed to this kind of exercise, hardly feel the motion, and the portion of the body most subject to pain in riding a rough camel upon two bare pieces of wood for a saddle, becomes naturally adapted for such rough service, as monkeys become hardened from constantly sitting upon rough substances. The children commence almost as soon as they are born, as they must accompany their mothers in their annual migrations; and no sooner can the young Arab sit astride and hold on than he is placed behind his father's saddle, to which he clings, while he bumps upon the bare back of the jolting camel. Nature quickly arranges a horny protection to the nerves, by the thickening of the skin; thus, an Arab's opinion of the action of a riding hygeen should never be accepted without a personal trial. What appears delightful to him may be torture to you, as a strong breeze and a rough sea may be charming to a sailor, but worse than death to a landsman.

I was determined not to accept the camels now offered as hygeens until I had seen them tried. I accordingly ordered our black soldier, El Baggar, to saddle the most easy-actioned animal for my wife; but I wished to see him put it through a variety of paces before she should accept it. The delighted EL Baggar, who from long practice was as hard as the heel of a boot, disdained a saddle. The animal knelt, was mounted, and off he started at full trot, performing a circle of about fifty yards' diameter as though in a circus. I never saw such an exhibition! "Warranted quiet to ride, of easy action, and fit for a lady!" This had been the character received with the rampant brute, who now, with head and tail erect, went tearing round the circle, screaming and roaring like a wild beast, throwing his forelegs forward and stepping at least three feet high in his trot.

Where was El Baggar? A disjointed looking black figure was sometimes on the back of this easy going camel, sometimes a foot high in the air; arms, head, legs, hands, appeared like a confused mass of dislocation; the woolly hair of this unearthly individual, that had been carefully trained in long stiff narrow curls, precisely similar to the tobacco known as "negro-head," alternately started upright en masse, as though under the influence of electricity, and then fell as suddenly upon his shoulders. Had the dark individual been a "black dose", he or it could not have been more thoroughly shaken. This object, so thoroughly disguised by rapidity of movement, was El Baggar happy, delighted El Baggar! As he came rapidly round toward us flourishing his coorbach, I called to him, "Is that a nice hygeen for the Sit (lady), EL Baggar? Is it very easy?" He was almost incapable of a reply. "V-e-r-y e-e-a-a-s-y," replied the trustworthy authority, "j-j-j-just the thin-n-n-g for the S-i-i-i-t-t-t." "All right, that will do," I answered, and the jockey pulled up his steed. "Are the other camels better or worse than that?" I asked. "Much worse," replied El Baggar; "the others are rather rough, but this is an easy goer, and will suit the lady well."

It was impossible to hire a good hygeen; an Arab prizes his riding animal too much, and invariably refuses to let it to a stranger, but generally imposes upon him by substituting some lightly-built camel that he thinks will pass muster. I accordingly chose for my wife a steady-going animal from among the baggage-camels, trusting to be able to obtain a hygeen from the great Sheik Abou Sinn, who was encamped upon the road we were about to take along the valley of the Atbara. We left Goorashee on the following day.

CHAPTER III

The Arabs' exodus-Reception by Abou Sinn-Arabs dressing the hair-Toilet of an Arab woman-The plague of lice-Wives among the Arabs-The Old Testament confirmed

IT was the season of rejoicing. Everybody appeared in good humor. The distended udders of thousands of camels were an assurance of plenty. The burning sun that for nine months had scorched the earth was veiled by passing clouds. The cattle that had panted for water, and whose food was withered straw, were filled with juicy fodder. The camels that had subsisted upon the dried and leafless twigs and branches, now feasted upon the succulent tops of the mimosas. Throngs of women and children mounted upon camels, protected by the peculiar gaudy saddle-hood, ornamented with cowrie-shells, accompanied the march. Thousands of sheep and goats, driven by Arab boys, were straggling in all directions. Baggage-camels, heavily laden with the quaint household goods, blocked up the way. The fine bronzed figures of Arabs, with sword and shield, and white topes, or plaids, guided their milk-white dromedaries through the confused throng with the usual placid dignity of their race, simply passing by with the usual greeting, "Salaam aleikum" (Peace be with you).

It was the Exodus; all were hurrying toward the promised land—"the land flowing with milk and honey", where men and beasts would be secure, not only from the fevers of the south, but from that deadly enemy to camels and cattle, the fly. This terrible insect drove all before it.

If all were right in migrating to the north, it was a logical conclusion that we were wrong in going to the south during the rainy season; however, we now heard from the Arabs that we were within a couple of hours' march from the camp of the great Sheik Achmet Abou Sinn, to whom I had a letter of introduction. At the expiration of about that time we halted, and pitched the tents among some shady mimosas, while I sent Mahomet to Abou Sinn with the letter, and my firman.

I was busily engaged in making sundry necessary arrangements in the tent when Mahomet returned and announced the arrival of the great sheik in person. He was attended by several of his principal people, and as he approached through the bright green mimosas, mounted upon a beautiful snow-white hygeen, I was exceedingly struck with his venerable and dignified appearance. Upon near arrival I went forward to meet him and to assist him from his camel; but his animal knelt immediately at his command, and he dismounted with the ease and agility of a man of twenty.

He was the most magnificent specimen of an Arab that I have ever seen. Although upward of eighty years of age, he was as erect as a lance, and did not appear more than between fifty and sixty. He was of herculean stature, about six feet three inches high, with immensely broad shoulders and chest, a remarkably arched nose, eyes like an eagle's, beneath large, shaggy, but perfectly white eyebrows. A snow-white beard of great thickness descended below the middle of his breast. He wore a large white turban and a white cashmere abbai, or long robe, from the throat to the ankles. As a desert patriarch he was superb—the very perfection of all that the imagination could paint, if we should personify Abraham at the head of his people. This grand old Arab with the greatest politeness insisted upon our immediately accompanying him to his camp, as he could not allow us to remain in his country as strangers. He would hear of no excuses, but at once gave orders to Mahomet to have the baggage repacked and the tents removed, while we were requested to mount two superb white hygeens, with saddle-cloths of blue Persian sheepskins, that he had immediately accoutered when he heard from Mahomet of our miserable camels. The tent was struck, and we joined our venerable host with a line of wild and splendidly-mounted attendants, who followed us toward the sheik's encampment.

Among the retinue of the aged sheik whom we now accompanied, were ten of his sons, some of whom appeared to be quite as old as their father. We had ridden about two miles when we were suddenly met by a crowd of mounted men, armed with the usual swords and shields; many were on horses, others upon hygeens, and all drew up in lines parallel with our approach. These were Abou Sinn's people, who had assembled to give us the honorary welcome as guests of their chief. This

etiquette of the Arabs consists in galloping singly at full speed across the line of advance, the rider flourishing the sword over his head, and at the same moment reining up his horse upon its haunches so as to bring it to a sudden halt. This having been performed by about a hundred riders upon both horses and hygeens, they fell into line behind our party, and, thus escorted, we shortly arrived at the Arab encampment. In all countries the warmth of a public welcome appears to be exhibited by noise. The whole neighborhood had congregated to meet us; crowds of women raised the wild, shrill cry that is sounded alike for joy or sorrow; drums were beat; men dashed about with drawn swords and engaged in mimic fight, and in the midst of din and confusion we halted and dismounted. With peculiar grace of manner the old sheik assisted my wife to dismount, and led her to an open shed arranged with angareps (stretchers) covered with Persian carpets and cushions, so as to form a divan. Sherbet, pipes, and coffee were shortly handed to us, and Mahomet, as dragoman, translated the customary interchange of compliments; the sheik assured us that our unexpected arrival among them was "like the blessing of a new moon", the depth of which expression no one can understand who has not experienced life in the desert, where the first faint crescent is greeted with such enthusiasm.

Abou Sinn had arranged to move northward on the following day; we therefore agreed to pass one day in his camp, and to leave the next morning for Sofi, on the Atbara, about seventy-eight miles distant.

From Korosko to this point we had already passed the Bedouins, Bishareens, Hadendowas, Hallongas, until we had entered the Shookeriyahs. On the west of our present position were the Jalyns, and to the south near Sofi were the Dabainas. Many of the tribes claim a right to the title of Bedouins, as descended from that race. The customs of all the Arabs are nearly similar, and the distinction in appearance is confined to a peculiarity in dressing the hair. This is a matter of great importance among both men and women. It would be tedious to describe the minutiae of the various coiffures, but the great desire with all tribes, except the Jalyn, is to have a vast quantity of hair arranged in their own peculiar fashion, and not only smeared, but covered with as much fat as can be made to adhere. Thus, should a man wish to get himself up as a great dandy, he would put at least half a pound of butter or other fat upon his head. This would be worked up with his coarse locks by a friend, until it somewhat resembled a cauliflower. He would then arrange his tope or plaid of thick cotton cloth, and throw one end over his left shoulder, while slung from the same shoulder his circular shield would hang upon his back; suspended by a strap over the right shoulder would hang his long two-edged broadsword.

Fat is the great desideratum of an Arab. His head, as I have described, should be a mass of grease; he rubs his body with oil or other ointment; his clothes, i.e. his one garment or tope, is covered with grease, and internally he swallows as much as he can procure.

The great Sheik Abou Sinn, who is upward of eighty, as upright as a dart, a perfect Hercules, and whose children and grandchildren are like the sand of the sea-shore, has always consumed daily throughout his life two rottolis (pounds) of melted butter. A short time before I left the country he married a new young wife about fourteen years of age. This may be a hint to octogenarians.

The fat most esteemed for dressing the hair is that of the sheep. This undergoes a curious preparation, which renders it similar in appearance to cold cream; upon the raw fat being taken from the animal it is chewed in the mouth by an Arab for about two hours, being frequently taken out for examination during that time, until it has assumed the desired consistency. To prepare sufficient to enable a man to appear in full dress, several persons must be employed in masticating fat at the same time. This species of pomade, when properly made, is perfectly white, and exceedingly light and frothy. It may be imagined that when exposed to a burning sun, the beauty of the head-dress quickly disappears; but the oil then runs down the neck and back, which is considered quite correct, especially when the tope becomes thoroughly greased. The man is then perfectly anointed. We had seen an amusing example of this when on the march from Berber to Gozerajup. The Turk, Hadji Achmet, had pressed into our service, as a guide for a few miles, a dandy who had just been arranged as a cauliflower, with at least half a pound of white fat upon his head. As we were travelling upward

of four miles an hour in an intense heat, during which he was obliged to run, the fat ran quicker than he did, and at the end of a couple of hours both the dandy and his pomade were exhausted. The poor fellow had to return to his friends with the total loss of personal appearance and half a pound of butter.

Not only are the Arabs particular in their pomade, but great attention is bestowed upon perfumery, especially by the women. Various perfumes are brought from Cairo by the travelling native merchants, among which those most in demand are oil of roses, oil of sandal-wood, an essence from the blossom of a species of mimosa, essence of musk, and the oil of cloves. The women have a peculiar method of scenting their bodies and clothes by an operation that is considered to be one of the necessities of life, and which is repeated at regular intervals. In the floor of the tent, or hut, as it may chance to be, a small hole is excavated sufficiently large to contain a common-sized champagne bottle. A fire of charcoal, or of simply glowing embers, is made within the hole, into which the woman about to be scented throws a handful of various drugs. She then takes off the cloth or tope which forms her dress, and crouches naked over the fumes, while she arranges her robe to fall as a mantle from her neck to the ground like a tent. When this arrangement is concluded she is perfectly happy, as none of the precious fumes can escape, all being retained beneath the robe, precisely as if she wore a crinoline with an incense-burner beneath it, which would be a far more simple way of performing the operation. She now begins to perspire freely in the hot-air bath, and the pores of the skin being thus opened and moist, the volatile oil from the smoke of the burning perfumes is immediately absorbed.

By the time that the fire has expired the scenting process is completed, and both her person and robe are redolent of incense, with which they are so thoroughly impregnated that I have frequently smelt a party of women strongly at full a hundred yards' distance, when the wind has been blowing from their direction.

The Arab women do not indulge in fashions. Strictly conservative in their manners and customs, they never imitate, but they simply vie with each other in the superlativeness of their own style; thus the dressing of the hair is a most elaborate affair, which occupies a considerable portion of their time. It is quite impossible for an Arab woman to arrange her own hair; she therefore employs an assistant, who, if clever in the art, will generally occupy about three days before the operation is concluded. First, the hair must be combed with a long skewer-like pin; then, when well divided, it becomes possible to use an exceedingly coarse wooden comb. When the hair is reduced to reasonable order by the latter process, a vigorous hunt takes place, which occupies about an hour, according to the amount of game preserved. The sport concluded, the hair is rubbed with a mixture of oil of roses, myrrh, and sandal-wood dust mixed with a powder of cloves and cassia. When well greased and rendered somewhat stiff by the solids thus introduced, it is plaited into at least two hundred fine plaits; each of these plaits is then smeared with a mixture of sandal-wood dust and either gum water or paste of dhurra flour. On the last day of the operation, each tiny plait is carefully opened by the long hairpin or skewer, and the head is ravissante. Scented and frizzled in this manner with a well-greased tope or robe, the Arab lady's toilet is complete. Her head is then a little larger than the largest sized English mop, and her perfume is something between the aroma of a perfumer's shop and the monkey-house at the Zoological Gardens. This is considered "very killing," and I have been quite of that opinion when a crowd of women have visited my wife in our tent, with the thermometer at 95 degrees C, and have kindly consented to allow me to remain as one of the party.

It is hardly necessary to add that the operation of hairdressing is not often performed, but that the effect is permanent for about a week, during which time the game becomes so excessively lively that the creatures require stirring up with the long hairpin or skewer whenever too unruly. This appears to be constantly necessary from the vigorous employment of the ruling sceptre during conversation. A levee of Arab women in the tent was therefore a disagreeable invasion, as we dreaded the fugitives; fortunately, they appeared to cling to the followers of Mahomet in preference to Christians.

The plague of lice brought upon the Egyptians by Moses has certainly adhered to the country ever since, if "lice" is the proper translation of the Hebrew word in the Old Testament. It is my own

opinion that the insects thus inflicted upon the population were not lice, but ticks. Exod. 8:16: "The dust became lice throughout all Egypt;" again, Exod. 8:17: "Smote dust... it became lice in man and beast." Now the louse that infests the human body and hair has no connection whatever with "dust," and if subject to a few hours' exposure to the dry heat of the burning sand, it would shrivel and die. But the tick is an inhabitant of the dust, a dry horny insect without any apparent moisture in its composition; it lives in hot sand and dust, where it cannot possibly obtain nourishment, until some wretched animal lies down upon the spot, when it becomes covered with these horrible vermin. I have frequently seen dry desert places so infested with ticks that the ground was perfectly alive with them, and it would have been impossible to rest on the earth.

In such spots, the passage in Exodus has frequently occurred to me as bearing reference to these vermin, which are the greatest enemies to man and beast. It is well known that, from the size of a grain of sand in their natural state, they will distend to the size of a hazelnut after having preyed for some days upon the blood of an animal. The Arabs are invariably infested with lice, not only in their hair, but upon their bodies and clothes; even the small charms or spells worn upon the arm in neatly-sewn leathern packets are full of these vermin. Such spells are generally verses copied from the Koran by the Faky, or priest, who receives some small gratuity in exchange. The men wear several such talismans upon the arm above the elbow, but the women wear a large bunch of charms, as a sort of chatelaine, suspended beneath their clothes around the waist.

Although the tope or robe, loosely but gracefully arranged around the body, appears to be the whole of the costume, the women wear beneath this garment a thin blue cotton cloth tightly bound round the loins, which descends to a little above the knee; beneath this, next to the skin, is the last garment, the rahat. The latter is the only clothing of young girls, and may be either perfectly simple or adorned with beads and cowrie shells according to the fancy of the wearer. It is perfectly effective as a dress, and admirably adapted to the climate.

The rahat is a fringe of fine dark brown or reddish twine, fastened to a belt, and worn round the waist. On either side are two long tassels, that are generally ornamented with beads or cowries, and dangle nearly to the ankles, while the rahat itself should descend to a little above the knee, or be rather shorter than a Highland kilt. Nothing can be prettier or more simple than this dress, which, although short, is of such thickly hanging fringe that it perfectly answers the purpose for which it is intended.

Many of the Arab girls are remarkably good-looking, with fine figures until they become mothers. They generally marry at the age of thirteen or fourteen, but frequently at twelve or even earlier. Until married, the rahat is their sole garment. Throughout the Arab tribes of Upper Egypt, chastity is a necessity, as an operation is performed at the early age of from three to five years that thoroughly protects all females and which renders them physically proof against incontinency.

There is but little love-making among the Arabs. The affair of matrimony usually commences by a present to the father of the girl, which, if accepted, is followed by a similar advance to the girl herself, and the arrangement is completed. All the friends of both parties are called together for the wedding; pistols and guns are fired off, if possessed. There is much feasting, and the unfortunate bridegroom undergoes the ordeal of whipping by the relatives of his bride, in order to test his courage. Sometimes this punishment is exceedingly severe, being inflicted with the coorbach or whip of hippopotamus hide, which is cracked vigorously about his ribs and back. If the happy husband wishes to be considered a man worth having, he must receive the chastisement with an expression of enjoyment; in which case the crowds of women again raise their thrilling cry in admiration. After the rejoicings of the day are over, the bride is led in the evening to the residence of her husband, while a beating of drums and strumming of guitars (rhababas) are kept up for some hours during the night, with the usual discordant singing.

There is no divorce court among the Arabs. They are not sufficiently advanced in civilization to accept a pecuniary fine as the price of a wife's dishonor; but a stroke of the husband's sword or a stab with the knife is generally the ready remedy for infidelity. Although strict Mahometans, the women

are never veiled; neither do they adopt the excessive reserve assumed by the Turks and Egyptians. The Arab women are generally idle, and one of the conditions of accepting a suitor is that a female slave is to be provided for the special use of the wife. No Arab woman will engage herself as a domestic servant; thus, so long as their present customs shall remain unchanged, slaves are creatures of necessity. Although the law of Mahomet limits the number of wives for each man to four at one time, the Arab women do not appear to restrict their husbands to this allowance, and the slaves of the establishment occupy the position of concubines.

The Arabs adhere strictly to their ancient customs, independently of the comparatively recent laws established by Mahomet. Thus, concubinage is not considered a breach of morality; neither is it regarded by the legitimate wives with jealousy. They attach great importance to the laws of Moses and to the customs of their forefathers; neither can they understand the reason for a change of habit in any respect where necessity has not suggested the reform. The Arabs are creatures of necessity; their nomadic life is compulsory, as the existence of their flocks and herds depends upon the pasturage. Thus, with the change of seasons they must change their localities, according to the presence of fodder for their cattle. Driven to and fro by the accidents of climate, the Arab has been compelled to become a wanderer; and precisely as the wild beasts of the country are driven from place to place either by the arrival of the fly, the lack of pasturage, or by the want of water, even so must the flocks of the Arab obey the law of necessity, in a country where the burning sun and total absence of rain for nine months of the year convert the green pastures into a sandy desert.

The Arab cannot halt on one spot longer than the pasturage will support his flocks; therefore his necessity is food for his beasts. The object of his life being fodder, he must wander in search of the ever-changing supply. His wants must be few, as the constant changes of encampment necessitate the transport of all his household goods; thus he reduces to a minimum the domestic furniture and utensils. No desires for strange and fresh objects excite his mind to improvement, or alter his original habits; he must limit his impedimenta, not increase them. Thus with a few necessary articles he is contented. Mats for his tent, ropes manufactured with the hair of his goats and camels, pots for carrying fat, water-jars and earthenware pots or gourd-shells for containing milk, leather water-skins for the desert, and sheep-skin bags for his clothes—these are the requirements of the Arabs. Their patterns have never changed, but the water-jar of to-day is of the same form as that carried to the well by the women of thousands of years ago. The conversation of the Arabs is in the exact style of the Old Testament. The name of God is coupled with every trifling incident in life, and they believe in the continual action of divine special interference. Should a famine afflict the country, it is expressed in the stern language of the bible—"The Lord has sent a grievous famine upon the land;" or, "The Lord called for a famine, and it came upon the land." Should their cattle fall sick, it is considered to be an affliction by divine command; or should the flocks prosper and multiply particularly well during one season, the prosperity is attributed to special interference. Nothing can happen in the usual routine of daily life without a direct connection with the hand of God, according to the Arab's belief.

This striking similarity to the descriptions of the Old Testament is exceedingly interesting to a traveller when residing among these curious and original people. With the Bible in one hand, and these unchanged tribes before the eyes, there is a thrilling illustration of the sacred record; the past becomes the present; the veil of three thousand years is raised, and the living picture is a witness to the exactness of the historical description. At the same time there is a light thrown upon many obscure passages in the Old Testament by a knowledge of the present customs and figures of speech of the Arabs, which are precisely those that were practised at the periods described. I do not attempt to enter upon a theological treatise, therefore it is unnecessary to allude specially to these particular points. The sudden and desolating arrival of a flight of locusts, the plague, or any other unforeseen calamity, is attributed to the anger of God, and is believed to be an infliction of punishment upon the people thus visited, precisely as the plagues of Egypt were specially inflicted upon Pharaoh and the Egyptians.

Should the present history of the country be written by an Arab scribe, the style of the description would be purely that of the Old Testament; and the various calamities or the good fortunes that have in the course of nature befallen both the tribes and individuals would be recounted either as special visitations of divine wrath or blessings for good deeds performed. If in a dream a particular course of action is suggested, the Arab believes that God has spoken and directed him. The Arab scribe or historian would describe the event as the "voice of the Lord" ("kallam el Allah"), having spoken unto the person; or, that God appeared to him in a dream and "said," etc. Thus much allowance would be necessary on the part of a European reader for the figurative ideas and expressions of the people. As the Arabs are unchanged, the theological opinions which they now hold are the same as those which prevailed in remote ages, with the simple addition of their belief in Mahomet as the Prophet.

CHAPTER IV

On the Abyssinian border. A new school of medicine—Sacred shrines and epidemics.

We left the camp of Abou Sinn on the morning of July 25th, and in a few rapid marches arrived at Tomat, a lovely spot at the junction of the Atbara with the Settite.

The Settite is the river par excellence, as it is the principal stream of Abyssinia, in which country it bears the name of "Tacazzy." Above the junction the Athara does not exceed two hundred yards in width. Both rivers have scooped out deep and broad valleys throughout their course. This fact confirmed my first impression that the supply of soil had been brought down by the Atbara to the Nile. The country on the opposite or eastern bank of the Atbara is contested ground. In reality it forms the western frontier of Abyssinia, of which the Atbara River is the boundary; but since the annexation of the Nubian provinces to Egypt there has been no safety for life or property upon the line of frontier; thus a large tract of country actually forming a portion of Abyssinia is uninhabited.

Upon our arrival at Sofi we were welcomed by the sheik, and by a German, Florian, who was delighted to see Europeans. He was a sallow, sickly-looking man, who with a large bony frame had been reduced from constant hard work and frequent sickness to little but skin and sinew. He was a mason, who had left Germany with the Austrian mission to Khartoum, but finding the work too laborious in such a climate, he and a friend, who was a carpenter, had declared for independence, and they had left the mission. They were both enterprising fellows, and sportsmen; therefore they had purchased rifles and ammunition, and had commenced life as hunters. At the same time they employed their leisure hours in earning money by the work of their hands in various ways.

I determined to arrange our winter quarters at Sofi for three months' stay, during which I should have ample time to gain information and complete arrangements for the future. I accordingly succeeded in purchasing a remarkably neat house for ten piastres (two shillings). The architecture was of an ancient style, from the original design of a pill-box surmounted by a candle extinguisher. I purchased two additional huts, which were erected at the back of our mansion, one as the kitchen, the other as the servants' hall.

In the course of a week we had as pretty a camp as Robinson Crusoe himself could have coveted. We had a view of about five miles in extent along the valley of the Atbara, and it was my daily amusement to scan with my telescope the uninhabited country upon the opposite side of the river and watch the wild animals as they grazed in perfect security. We were thoroughly happy at Sofi. There was a delightful calm and a sense of rest, a total estrangement from the cares of the world, and an enchanting contrast in the soft green verdure of the landscape before us, to the many hundred weary miles of burning desert through which we had toiled from Lower Egypt.

Time glided away smoothly until the fever invaded our camp. Florian became seriously ill. My wife was prostrated by a severe attack of gastric fever, which for nine days rendered her recovery almost hopeless. Then came the plague of boils, and soon after a species of intolerable itch, called the coorash. I adopted for this latter a specific I had found successful with the mange in dogs, namely, gunpowder, with one fourth sulphur added, made into a soft paste with water, and then formed into an ointment with fat. It worked like a charm with the coorash.

Faith is the drug that is supposed to cure the Arab; whatever his complaint may be, he applies to his Faky or priest. This minister is not troubled with a confusion of book-learning, neither are the shelves of his library bending beneath weighty treatises upon the various maladies of human nature; but he possesses the key to all learning, the talisman that will apply to all cases, in that one holy book, the Koran. This is his complete pharmacopoeia: his medicine chest, combining purgatives, blisters, sudorifics, styptics, narcotics, emetics, and all that the most profound M.D. could prescribe. With this "multum in parvo" stock-in-trade the Faky receives his patients. No. 1 arrives, a barren woman who requests some medicine that will promote the blessing of childbirth. No. 2, a man who was strong in

his youth, but from excessive dissipation has become useless. No. 3, a man deformed from his birth, who wishes to become straight as other men. No. 4, a blind child. No. 5, a dying old woman, carried on a litter; and sundry other impossible cases, with others of a more simple character.

The Faky produces his book, the holy Koran, and with a pen formed of a reed he proceeds to write a prescription—not to be made up by an apothecary, as such dangerous people do not exist; but the prescription itself is to be SWALLOWED! Upon a smooth board, like a slate, he rubs sufficient lime to produce a perfectly white surface; upon this he writes in large characters, with thick glutinous ink, a verse or verses from the Koran that he considers applicable to the case; this completed, he washes off the holy quotation, and converts it into a potion by the addition of a little water; this is swallowed in perfect faith by the patient, who in return pays a fee according to the demand of the Faky.

As few people can read or write, there is an air of mystery in the art of writing which much enhances the value of a scrap of paper upon which is written a verse from the Koran. A few piastres are willingly expended in the purchase of such talismans, which are carefully and very neatly sewn into small envelopes of leather, and are worn by all people, being handed down from father to son.

The Arabs are especially fond of relics; thus, upon the return from a pilgrimage to Mecca, the "hadji" or pilgrim is certain to have purchased from some religious Faky of the sacred shrine either a few square inches of cloth, or some such trifle, that belonged to the prophet Mahomet. This is exhibited to his friends and strangers as a wonderful spell against some particular malady, and it is handed about and received with extreme reverence by the assembled crowd. I once formed one of a circle when a pilgrim returned to his native village. We sat in a considerable number upon the ground, while he drew from his bosom a leather envelope, suspended from his neck, from which he produced a piece of extremely greasy woollen cloth, about three inches square, the original color of which it would have been impossible to guess. This was a piece of Mahomet's garment, but what portion he could not say. The pilgrim had paid largely for this blessed relic, and it was passed round our circle from hand to hand, after having first been kissed by the proprietor, who raised it to the crown of his head, which he touched with the cloth, and then wiped both his eyes. Each person who received it went through a similar performance, and as ophthalmia and other diseases of the eyes were extremely prevalent, several of the party had eyes that had not the brightness of the gazelle's; nevertheless, these were supposed to become brighter after having been wiped by the holy cloth. How many eyes this same piece of cloth had wiped, it would be impossible to say, but such facts are sufficient to prove the danger of holy relics, that are inoculators of all manner of contagious diseases.

I believe in holy shrines as the pest spots of the world. We generally have experienced in Western Europe that all violent epidemics arrive from the East. The great breadth of the Atlantic boundary would naturally protect us from the West, but infectious disorders, such as plague, cholera, small-pox, etc., may be generally tracked throughout their gradations from their original nests. Those nests are in the East, where the heat of the climate acting upon the filth of semi-savage communities engenders pestilence.

The holy places of both Christians and Mahometans are the receptacles for the masses of people of all nations and classes who have arrived from all points of the compass. The greater number of such people are of poor estate, and many have toiled on foot from immense distances, suffering from hunger and fatigue, and bringing with them not only the diseases of their own remote counties, but arriving in that weak state that courts the attack of any epidemic. Thus crowded together, with a scarcity of provisions, a want of water, and no possibility of cleanliness, with clothes that have been unwashed for weeks or months, in a camp of dirty pilgrims, without any attempt at drainage, an accumulation of filth takes place that generates either cholera or typhus; the latter, in its most malignant form, appears as the dreaded "plague." Should such an epidemic attack the mass of pilgrims debilitated by the want of nourishing food, and exhausted by their fatiguing march, it runs riot like a fire among combustibles, and the loss of life is terrific. The survivors radiate from this common

centre, upon their return to their respective homes, to which they carry the seeds of the pestilence to germinate upon new soils in different countries. Doubtless the clothes of the dead furnish materials for innumerable holy relics as vestiges of the wardrobe of the Prophet. These are disseminated by the pilgrims throughout all countries, pregnant with disease; and, being brought into personal contact with hosts of true believers, Pandora's box could not be more fatal.

Not only are relics upon a pocket scale conveyed by pilgrims and revered by the Arabs, but the body of any Faky who in lifetime was considered unusually holy is brought from a great distance to be interred in some particular spot. In countries where a tree is a rarity, a plank for a coffin is unknown; thus the reverend Faky, who may have died of typhus, is wrapped in cloths and packed in a mat. In this form he is transported, perhaps some hundred miles, slung upon a camel, with the thermometer above 130 degrees Fah. in the sun, and he is conveyed to the village that is so fortunate as to be honored with his remains. It may be readily imagined that with a favorable wind the inhabitants are warned of his approach some time before his arrival.

Happily, long before we arrived at Sofi, the village had been blessed by the death of a celebrated Faky, a holy man who would have been described as a second Isaiah were the annals of the country duly chronicled. This great "man of God," as he was termed, had departed this life at a village on the borders of the Nile, about eight days' hard camel-journey from Sofi; but from some assumed right, mingled no doubt with jobbery, the inhabitants of Sofi had laid claim to his body, and he had arrived upon a camel horizontally, and had been buried about fifty yards from the site of our camp. His grave was beneath a clump of mimosas that shaded the spot, and formed the most prominent object in the foreground of our landscape. Thither every Friday the women of the village congregated, with offerings of a few handfuls of dhurra in small gourd-shells, which they laid upon the grave, while they ATE THE HOLY EARTH in small pinches, which they scraped like rabbits, from a hole they had burrowed toward the venerated corpse. This hole was about two feet deep from continual scratching, and must have been very near the Faky.

Although thus reverent in their worship, the Arab's religion is a sort of adjustable one. The wild boar, for instance, is invariably eaten by the Arab hunters, although in direct opposition to the rules of the Koran. I once asked them what their Faky would say if he were aware of such a transgression. "Oh!" they replied, "we have already asked his permission, as we are sometimes severely pressed for food in the jungles. He says, 'If you have the KORAN in your hand and NO PIG, you are forbidden to eat pork; but if you have the PIG in your hand and NO KORAN, you had better eat what God has given you.'"

CHAPTER V

A primitive craft—Stalking the giraffes—My first giraffes—Rare sport with the finny tribe—Thieving elephants.

For many days, while at Sofi, we saw large herds of giraffes and antelopes on the opposite side of the river, about two miles distant. On September 2d a herd of twenty-eight giraffes tempted me at all hazards to cross the river. So we prepared an impromptu raft. My angarep (bedstead) was quickly inverted. Six water-skins were inflated, and lashed, three on either side. A shallow packing-case, lined with tin, containing my gun, was fastened in the centre of the angarep, and two towlines were attached to the front part of the raft, by which swimmers were to draw it across the river. Two men were to hang on behind, and, if possible, keep it straight in the rapid current. After some difficulty we arrived at the opposite bank, and scrambled through thick bushes, upon our hands and knees, to the summit.

For about two miles' breadth on this side of the river the valley was rough broken ground, full of gullies and ravines sixty or seventy feet deep, beds of torrents, bare sandstone rocks, bushy crags, fine grassy knolls, and long strips of mimosa covert, forming a most perfect locality for shooting.

I had observed by the telescope that the giraffes were standing as usual upon an elevated position, from whence they could keep a good lookout. I knew it would be useless to ascend the slope directly, as their long necks give these animals an advantage similar to that of the man at the masthead; therefore, although we had the wind in our favor, we should have been observed. I accordingly determined to make a great circuit of about five miles, and thus to approach them from above, with the advantage of the broken ground for stalking. It was the perfection of uneven country. By clambering up broken cliffs, wading shoulder-deep through muddy gullies, sliding down the steep ravines, and winding through narrow bottoms of high grass and mimosas for about two hours, we at length arrived at the point of the high table-land upon the verge of which I had first noticed the giraffes with the telescope. Almost immediately I distinguished the tall neck of one of these splendid animals about half a mile distant upon my left, a little below the table-land; it was feeding on the bushes, and I quickly discovered several others near the leader of the herd. I was not far enough advanced in the circuit that I had intended to bring me exactly above them, therefore I turned sharp to my right, intending to make a short half circle, and to arrive on the leeward side of the herd, as I was now to windward. This I fortunately completed, but I had marked a thick bush as my point of cover, and upon arrival I found that the herd had fed down wind, and that I was within two hundred yards of the great bull sentinel that, having moved from his former position, was now standing directly before me.

I lay down quietly behind the bush with my two followers, and anxiously watched the great leader, momentarily expecting that it would get my wind. It was shortly joined by two others, and I perceived the heads of several giraffes lower down the incline, that were now feeding on their way to the higher ground. The seroot fly was teasing them, and I remarked that several birds were fluttering about their heads, sometimes perching upon their noses and catching the fly that attacked their nostrils, while the giraffes appeared relieved by their attentions. These birds were of a peculiar species that attacks the domestic animals, and not only relieves them of vermin, but eats into the flesh and establishes dangerous sores. A puff of wind now gently fanned the back of my neck; it was cool and delightful, but no sooner did I feel the refreshing breeze than I knew it would convey our scent directly to the giraffes. A few seconds afterward the three grand obelisks threw their heads still higher in the air, and fixing their great black eyes upon the spot from which the warning came, they remained as motionless as though carved from stone. From their great height they could see over the bush behind which we were lying at some paces distant, and although I do not think they could distinguish us to be men, they could see enough to convince them of hidden enemies.

The attitude of fixed attention and surprise of the three giraffes was sufficient warning for the rest of the herd, who immediately filed up from the lower ground, and joined their comrades. All

now halted and gazed steadfastly in our direction, forming a superb tableau, their beautiful mottled skins glancing like the summer coat of a thoroughbred horse, the orange-colored statues standing out in high relief from a background of dark-green mimosas.

This beautiful picture soon changed. I knew that my chance of a close shot was hopeless, as they would presently make a rush and be off; thus I determined to get the first start. I had previously studied the ground, and I concluded that they would push forward at right angles with my position, as they had thus ascended the hill, and that, on reaching the higher ground, they would turn to the right, in order to reach an immense tract of high grass, as level as a billiard-table, from which no danger could approach them unobserved.

I accordingly with a gentle movement of my hand directed my people to follow me, and I made a sudden rush forward at full speed. Off went the herd, shambling along at a tremendous pace, whisking their long tails above their hind quarters, and, taking exactly the direction I had anticipated, they offered me a shoulder shot at a little within two hundred yards' distance. Unfortunately, I fell into a deep hole concealed by the high grass, and by the time that I resumed the hunt they had increased their distance; but I observed the leader turned sharply to the right, through some low mimosa bush, to make directly for the open table-land. I made a short cut obliquely at my best speed, and only halted when I saw that I should lose ground by altering my position. Stopping short, I was exactly opposite the herd as they filed by me at right angles in full speed, within about a hundred and eighty yards. I had my old Ceylon No. 10 double rifle, and I took a steady shot at a large dark-colored bull. The satisfactory sound of the ball upon his hide was followed almost immediately by his blundering forward for about twenty yards and falling heavily in the low bush. I heard the crack of the ball of my left-hand barrel upon another fine beast, but no effects followed. Bacheet quickly gave me the single two-ounce Manton rifle, and I singled out a fine dark-colored bull, who fell on his knees to the shot, but, recovering, hobbled off disabled, apart from the herd, with a foreleg broken just below the shoulder. Reloading immediately, I ran up to the spot, where I found my first giraffe lying dead, with the ball clean through both shoulders. The second was standing about one hundred paces distant. Upon my approach he attempted to move, but immediately fell, and was despatched by my eager Arabs. I followed the herd for about a mile to no purpose, through deep clammy ground and high grass, and I returned to our game.

These were my first giraffes, and I admired them as they lay before me with a hunter's pride and satisfaction, but mingled with a feeling of pity for such beautiful and utterly helpless creatures. The giraffe, although from sixteen to twenty feet in height, is perfectly defenceless, and can only trust to the swiftness of its pace and the extraordinary power of vision, for its means of protection. The eye of this animal is the most beautiful exaggeration of that of the gazelle, while the color of the reddish-orange hide, mottled with darker spots, changes the tints of the skin with the differing rays of light, according to the muscular movement of the body. No one who has merely seen the giraffe in a cold climate can form the least idea of its beauty in its native land.

Life at Sofi was becoming sadly monotonous, and I determined to move my party across the river to camp on the uninhabited side. The rains had almost ceased, so we should be able to live in a tent by night, and to form a shady nook beneath some mimosas by day. On the 15th of September the entire male population of Sofi turned out to assist us across the river. I had arranged a raft by attaching eight inflated skins to the bedstead, upon which I lashed our large circular sponging bath. Four hippopotami hunters were harnessed as tug steamers. By evening all our party, with the baggage, had effected the crossing without accident—all but Achmet, Mahomet's mother's brother's cousin's sister's mother's son, who took advantage of his near relative, when the latter was in the middle of the stream, and ran off with most of his personal effects.

The life at our new camp was charmingly independent. We were upon Abyssinian territory, but as the country was uninhabited we considered it as our own. Our camp was near the mouth of a small stream, the Till, tributary to the Atbara, which afforded some excellent sport in fishing. Choosing

one day a fish of about half a pound for bait, I dropped this in the river about twenty yards beyond the mouth of the Till, and allowed it to swim naturally down the stream so as to pass across the Till junction, and descend the deep channel between the rocks. For about ten minutes I had no run. I had twice tried the same water without success; nothing would admire my charming bait; when, just as it had reached the favorite turning-point at the extremity of a rock, away dashed the line, with the tremendous rush that follows the attack of a heavy fish. Trusting to the soundness of my tackle, I struck hard and fixed my new acquaintance thoroughly, but off he dashed down the stream for about fifty yards at one rush, making for a narrow channel between two rocks, through which the stream ran like a mill-race. Should he pass this channel, I knew he would cut the line across the rock; therefore, giving him the butt, I held him by main force, and by the great swirl in the water I saw that I was bringing him to the surface; but just as I expected to see him, my float having already appeared, away he darted in another direction, taking sixty or seventy yards of line without a check. I at once observed that he must pass a shallow sandbank favorable for landing a heavy fish; I therefore checked him as he reached this spot, and I followed him down the bank, reeling up line as I ran parallel with his course. Now came the tug of war! I knew my hooks were good and the line sound, therefore I was determined not to let him escape beyond the favorable ground; and I put upon him a strain that, after much struggling, brought to the surface a great shovel-head, followed by a pair of broad silvery sides, as I led him gradually into shallow water. Bacheet now cleverly secured him by the gills, and dragged him in triumph to the shore. This was a splendid bayard, of at least forty pounds' weight.

I laid my prize upon some green reeds, and covered it carefully with the same cool material. I then replaced my bait by a lively fish, and once more tried the river. In a very short time I had another run, and landed a small fish of about nine pounds, of the same species. Not wishing to catch fish of that size, I put on a large bait, and threw it about forty yards into the river, well up the stream, and allowed the float to sweep the water in a half circle, thus taking the chance of different distances from the shore. For about half an hour nothing moved. I was just preparing to alter my position, when out rushed my line, and, striking hard, I believed I fixed the old gentleman himself, for I had no control over him whatever. Holding him was out of the question; the line flew through my hands, cutting them till the blood flowed, and I was obliged to let the fish take his own way. This he did for about eighty yards, when he suddenly stopped. This unexpected halt was a great calamity, for the reel overran itself, having no checkwheel, and the slack bends of the line caught the handle just as he again rushed forward, and with a jerk that nearly pulled the rod from my hands he was gone! I found one of my large hooks broken short off. The fish was a monster!

After this bad luck I had no run until the evening, when, putting on a large bait, and fishing at the tail of a rock between the stream and still water, I once more had a fine rush, and hooked a big one. There were no rocks down stream, all was fair play and clear water, and away he went at racing pace straight for the middle of the river. To check the pace I grasped the line with the stuff of my loose trousers, and pressed it between my fingers so as to act as a brake and compel him to labor for every yard; but he pulled like a horse, and nearly cut through the thick cotton cloth, making straight running for at least a hundred yards without a halt. I now put so severe a strain upon him that my strong bamboo bent nearly double, and the fish presently so far yielded to the pressure that I could enforce his running in half circles instead of straight away. I kept gaining line until I at length led him into a shallow bay, and after a great fight Bacheet embraced him by falling upon him and clutching the monster with hands and knees; he then tugged to the shore a magnificent fish of upward of sixty pounds. For about twenty minutes he had fought against such a strain as I had never before used upon a fish; but I had now adopted hooks of such a large size and thickness that it was hardly possible for them to break, unless snapped by a crocodile. My reel was so loosened from the rod, that had the struggle lasted a few minutes longer I must have been vanquished. This fish measured three feet eight inches to the root of the tail, and two feet three inches in girth of shoulders; the head measured one foot ten inches in circumference. It was of the same species as those I had already caught.

Over a month was passed at our camp, Ehetilla, as we called it. The time passed in hunting, fishing, and observing the country, but it was for the most part uneventful. In the end of October we removed to a village called Wat el Negur, nine miles south-east of Ehetilla, still on the bank of the Atbara.

Our arrival was welcomed with enthusiasm. The Arabs here had extensive plantations of sesame, dhurra, and cotton, and the nights were spent in watching them, to scare away the elephants, which, with extreme cunning, invaded the fields of dhurra at different points every night, and retreated before morning to the thick, thorny jungles of the Settite. The Arabs were without firearms, and the celebrated aggageers or sword-hunters were useless, as the elephants appeared only at night, and were far too cunning to give them a chance. I was importuned to drive away the elephants, and one evening, about nine o'clock, I arrived at the plantations with three men carrying spare guns. We had not been half an hour in the dhurra fields before we met a couple of Arab watchers, who informed us that a herd of elephants was already in the plantation; we accordingly followed our guides. In about a quarter of an hour we distinctly heard the cracking of the dhurra stems, as the elephants browsed and trampled them beneath their feet.

Taking the proper position of the wind, I led our party cautiously in the direction of the sound, and in about five minutes I came in view of the slate-colored and dusky forms of the herd. The moon was bright, and I counted nine elephants; they had trampled a space of about fifty yards square into a barren level, and they were now slowly moving forward, feeding as they went. One elephant, unfortunately, was separated from the herd, and was about forty yards in the rear; this fellow I was afraid would render our approach difficult. Cautioning my men, especially Bacheet, to keep close to me with the spare rifles, I crept along the alleys formed by the tall rows of dhurra, and after carefully stalking against the wind, I felt sure that it would be necessary to kill the single elephant before I should be able to attack the herd. Accordingly I crept nearer and nearer, well concealed in the favorable crop of high and sheltering stems, until I was within fifteen yards of the hindmost animal. As I had never shot one of the African species, I was determined to follow the Ceylon plan, and get as near as possible; therefore I continued to creep from row to row of dhurra, until I at length stood at the very tail of the elephant in the next row. I could easily have touched it with my rifle, but just at this moment it either obtained my wind or it heard the rustle of the men. It quickly turned its head half round toward me; in the same instant I took the temple-shot, and by the flash of the rifle I saw that it fell. Jumping forward past the huge body, I fired the left-hand barrel at an elephant that had advanced from the herd; it fell immediately! Now came the moment for a grand rush, as they stumbled in confusion over the last fallen elephant, and jammed together in a dense mass with their immense ears outspread, forming a picture of intense astonishment! Where were my spare guns? Here was an excellent opportunity to run in and floor them right and left!

Not a man was in sight! Everybody had bolted, and I stood in advance of the dead elephant calling for my guns in vain. At length one of my fellows came up, but it was too late. The fallen elephant in the herd had risen from the ground, and they had all hustled off at a great pace, and were gone. I had only bagged one elephant. Where was the valiant Bacheet—the would-be Nimrod, who for the last three months had been fretting in inactivity, and longing for the moment of action, when he had promised to be my trusty gun-bearer? He was the last man to appear, and he only ventured from his hiding-place in the high dhurra when assured of the elephants' retreat. I was obliged to admonish the whole party by a little physical treatment, and the gallant Bacheet returned with us to the village, crestfallen and completely subdued. On the following day not a vestige remained of the elephant, except the offal; the Arabs had not only cut off the flesh, but they had hacked the skull and the bones in pieces, and carried them off to boil down for soup.

CHAPTER VI

Preparations for advance—Mek Nimmur makes a foray—The Hamran elephant-hunters—In the haunts of the elephant—A desperate charge.

The time was approaching when the grass throughout the country would be sufficiently dry to be fired. We accordingly prepared for our expedition; but it was first necessary for me to go to Katariff, sixty miles distant, to engage men, and to procure a slave in place of old Masara, whose owner would not trust her in the wild region we were about to visit.

I engaged six strong Tokrooris for five months, and purchased a slave woman for thirty-five dollars. The name of the woman was Barrake. She was about twenty-two years of age, brown in complexion, fat and strong, rather tall, and altogether she was a fine, powerful-looking woman, but decidedly not pretty. Her hair was elaborately dressed in hundreds of long narrow curls, so thickly smeared with castor oil that the grease had covered her naked shoulders. In addition to this, as she had been recently under the hands of the hairdresser, there was an amount of fat and other nastiness upon her head that gave her the appearance of being nearly gray.

Through the medium of Mahomet I explained to her that she was no longer a slave, as I had purchased her freedom; that she would not even be compelled to remain with us, but she could do as she thought proper; that both her mistress and I should be exceedingly kind to her, and we would subsequently find her a good situation in Cairo; in the mean time she would receive good clothes and wages. This, Mahomet, much against his will, was obliged to translate literally. The effect was magical; the woman, who had looked frightened and unhappy, suddenly beamed with smiles, and without any warning she ran toward me, and in an instant I found myself embraced in her loving arms. She pressed me to her bosom, and smothered me with castor-oily kisses, while her greasy ringlets hung upon my face and neck. How long this entertainment would have lasted I cannot tell, but I was obliged to cry "Caffa! Caffa!" (enough! enough!) as it looked improper, and the perfumery was too rich. Fortunately my wife was present, but she did not appear to enjoy it more than I did. My snow-white blouse was soiled and greasy, and for the rest of the day I was a disagreeable compound of smells—castor oil, tallow, musk, sandal-wood, burnt shells, and Barrake.

Mahomet and Barrake herself, I believe, were the only people who really enjoyed this little event. "Ha!" Mahomet exclaimed, "this is your own fault! You insisted upon speaking kindly, and telling her that she is not a slave; now she thinks that she is one of your WIVES!" This was the real fact; the unfortunate ** Barrake ** had deceived herself. Never having been free, she could not understand the use of freedom unless she was to be a wife. She had understood my little address as a proposal, and of course she was disappointed; but as an action for breach of promise cannot be pressed in the Soudan, poor Barrake, although free, had not the happy rights of a free-born Englishwoman, who can heal her broken heart with a pecuniary plaster, and console herself with damages for the loss of a lover.

We were ready to start, having our party of servants complete, six Tokrooris—Moosa, Abdoolahi, Abderachman, Hassan, Adow, and Hadji Ali, with Mahomet, Wat Gamma, Bacheet, Mahomet secundus (a groom), and Barrake; total, eleven men and the cook.

When half way on our return from Katariff to Wat el Negur, we found the whole country in alarm, Mek Nimmur having suddenly made a foray. He had crossed the Atbara, plundered the district, and driven off large numbers of cattle and camels, after having killed a considerable number of people. No doubt the reports were somewhat exaggerated, but the inhabitants of the district were flying from their villages with their herds, and were flocking to Katariff. We arrived at Wat el Negur on the 3d of December, and we now felt the advantage of our friendship with the good Sheik Achmet, who, being a friend of Mek Nimmur, had saved our effects during our absence. These would otherwise have been plundered, as the robbers had paid him a visit. He had removed our tents and baggage

to his own house for protection. Not only had he thus protected our effects, but he had taken the opportunity of delivering the polite message to Mek Nimmur that I had entrusted to his charge—expressing a wish to pay him a visit as a countryman and friend of Mr. Mansfield Parkyns, who had formerly been so well received by his father.

My intention was to examine thoroughly all the great rivers of Abyssinia that were tributaries to the Nile. These were the Settite, Royan, Angrab, Salaam, Rahad, Dinder, and the Blue Nile. If possible, I should traverse the Galla country, and crossing the Blue Nile, I should endeavor to reach the White Nile. But this latter idea I subsequently found impracticable, as it would have interfered with the proper season for my projected journey up the White Nile in search of the sources. The Hamran Arabs were at this time encamped about twenty-five miles from Wat el Negur. I sent a messenger, accompanied by Mahomet, to the sheik, with the firman of the Viceroy, requesting him to supply me with elephant hunters (aggageers).

During the absence of Mahomet I received a very polite message from Mek Nimmur, accompanied by a present of twenty pounds of coffee, with an invitation to pay him a visit. His country lay between the Settite River and the Bahr Salaam; thus without his invitation I might have found it difficult to traverse his territory. So far all went well. I returned my salaams, and sent word that we intended to hunt through the ** Base ** country, after which we should have the honor of passing a few days with him on our road to the river Salaam, at which place we intended to hunt elephants and rhinoceroses.

Mahomet returned, accompanied by a large party of Hamran Arabs, including several hunters, one of whom was Sheik Abou Do Roussoul, the nephew of Sheik Owat. As his name in full was too long, he generally went by the abbreviation "Abou Do." He was a splendid fellow, a little above six feet one, with a light active figure, but exceedingly well-developed muscles. His face was strikingly handsome; his eyes were like those of a giraffe, but the sudden glance of an eagle lighted them up with a flash during the excitement of conversation, which showed little of the giraffe's gentle character. Abou Do was the only tall man of the party; the others were of middle height, with the exception of a little fellow named Jali, who was not above five feet four inches, but wonderfully muscular, and in expression a regular daredevil.

There were two parties of hunters among the Hamran Arabs, one under Abou Do, and the other consisting of four brothers Sherrif. The latter were the most celebrated aggageers among the renowned tribe of the Hamran. Their father and grandfather had been mighty Nimrods, and the broadswords wielded by their strong arms had descended to the men who now upheld the prestige of the ancient blades. The eldest was Taher Sherrif. His second brother, Roder Sherrif, was a very small, active-looking man, with a withered left arm. An elephant had at one time killed his horse, and on the same occasion had driven its sharp tusk through the arm of the rider, completely splitting the limb, and splintering the bone from the elbow-joint to the wrist to such an extent that by degrees the fragments had sloughed away, and the arm had become shrivelled and withered. It now resembled a mass of dried leather twisted into a deformity, without the slightest shape of an arm; this was about fourteen inches in length from the shoulder. The stiff and crippled hand, with contracted fingers, resembled the claw of a vulture.

In spite of his maimed condition, Roder Sherrif was the most celebrated leader in the elephant hunt. His was the dangerous post to ride close to the head of the infuriated animal and provoke the charge, and then to lead the elephant in pursuit, while the aggageers attacked it from behind. It was in the performance of this duty that he had met with the accident, as his horse had fallen over some hidden obstacle and was immediately caught. Being an exceedingly light weight he had continued to occupy this important position in the hunt, and the rigid fingers of the left hand served as a hook, upon which he could hang the reins.

My battery of rifles was now laid upon a mat for examination; they were in beautiful condition, and they excited the admiration of the entire party. The perfection of workmanship did not appear

to interest them so much as the size of the bores. They thrust their fingers down each muzzle, until they at last came to the "Baby," when, finding that two fingers could be easily introduced, they at once fell in love with that rifle in particular.

On the 17th of August, accompanied by the German, Florian, we said good-by to our kind friend Sheik Achmet and left Wat el Negur. At Geera, early at daybreak, several Arabs arrived with a report that elephants had been drinking in the river within half an hour's march of our sleeping-place. I immediately started with my men, accompanied by Florian, and we shortly arrived upon the tracks of the herd. I had three Hamran Arabs as trackers, one of whom, Taher Noor, had engaged to accompany us throughout the expedition.

For about eight miles we followed the spoor through high dried grass and thorny bush, until we at length arrived at a dense jungle of kittar—the most formidable of the hooked thorn mimosas. Here the tracks appeared to wander, some elephants having travelled straight ahead, while others had strayed to the right and left. For about two hours we travelled upon the circuitous tracks of the elephants to no purpose, when we suddenly were startled by the shrill trumpeting of one of these animals in the thick thorns, a few hundred yards to our left. The ground was so intensely hard and dry that it was impossible to distinguish the new tracks from the old, which crossed and recrossed in all directions. I therefore decided to walk carefully along the outskirts of the jungle, trusting to find their place of entrance by the fresh broken boughs. In about an hour we had thus examined two or three miles, without discovering a clew to their recent path, when we turned round a clump of bushes, and suddenly came in view of two grand elephants, standing at the edge of the dense thorns. Having our wind, they vanished instantly into the thick jungle. We could not follow them, as their course was down wind; we therefore made a circuit to leeward for about a mile, and finding that the elephants had not crossed in that direction, we felt sure that we must come upon them with the wind in our favor should they still be within the thorny jungle. This was certain, as it was their favorite retreat.

With the greatest labor I led the way, creeping frequently upon my hands and knees to avoid the hooks of the kittar bush, and occasionally listening for a sound. At length, after upward of an hour passed in this slow and fatiguing advance, I distinctly heard the flap of an elephant's ear, shortly followed by the deep guttural sigh of one of those animals, within a few paces; but so dense was the screen of jungle that I could see nothing. We waited for some minutes, but not the slightest sound could be heard; the elephants were aware of danger, and they were, like ourselves, listening attentively for the first intimation of an enemy.

This was a highly exciting moment. Should they charge, there would not be a possibility of escape, as the hooked thorns rendered any sudden movement almost impracticable. In another moment there was a tremendous crash; and with a sound like a whirlwind the herd dashed through the crackling jungle. I rushed forward, as I was uncertain whether they were in advance or retreat. Leaving a small sample of my nose upon a kittar thorn, and tearing my way, with naked arms, through what, in cold blood, would have appeared impassable, I caught sight of two elephants leading across my path, with the herd following in a dense mass behind them. Firing a shot at the leading elephant, simply in the endeavor to check the herd, I repeated with the left-hand barrel at the head of his companion. This staggered him, and threw the main body into confusion. They immediately closed up in a dense mass, and bore everything before them; but the herd exhibited merely an impenetrable array of hind quarters wedged together so firmly that it was impossible to obtain a head or shoulder shot.

I was within fifteen paces of them, and so compactly were they packed that with all their immense strength they could not at once force so extensive a front through the tough and powerful branches of the dense kittar. For about half a minute they were absolutely checked, and they bored forward with all their might in their determination to open a road through the matted thorns. The elastic boughs, bent from their position, sprang back with dangerous force, and would have fractured the skull of any one who came within their sweep. A very large elephant was on the left flank, and for an instant he turned obliquely to the left. I quickly seized the opportunity and fired the "Baby," with

an explosive shell, aimed far back in the flank, trusting that it would penetrate beneath the opposite shoulder. The recoil of the "Baby," loaded with ten drams of the strongest powder and a half-pound shell, spun me round like a top. It was difficult to say which was staggered the more severely, the elephant or myself. However, we both recovered, and I seized one of my double rifles, a Reilly No. 10, that was quickly pushed into my hand by my Tokroori, Hadji Ali. This was done just in time, as an elephant from the battled herd turned sharp round, and, with its immense ears cocked, charged down upon us with a scream of rage. "One of us she must have if I miss!"

This was the first downright charge of an African elephant that I had seen, and instinctively I followed my old Ceylon plan of waiting for a close shot. She lowered her head when within about six yards, and I fired low for the centre of the forehead, exactly in the swelling above the root of the trunk. She collapsed to the shot, and fell dead, with a heavy shock, upon the ground. At the same moment the thorny barrier gave way before the pressure of the herd, and the elephants disappeared in the thick jungle, through which it was impossible to follow them.

I had suffered terribly from the hooked thorns, and the men had likewise. This had been a capital trial for my Tokrooris, who had behaved remarkably well, and had gained much confidence by my successful forehead-shot at the elephant when in full charge; but I must confess that this is the only instance in which I have succeeded in killing an African elephant by the front shot, although I have steadily tried the experiment upon subsequent occasions.

We had very little time to examine the elephant, as we were far from home and the sun was already low. I felt convinced that the other elephant could not be far off, after having received the "Baby's" half-pound shell carefully directed, and I resolved to return on the following morning with many people and camels to divide the flesh. It was dark by the time we arrived at the tents, and the news immediately spread through the Arab camp that two elephants had been killed.

On the following morning we started, and upon arrival at the dead elephant we followed the tracks of that wounded by the "Baby." The blood upon the bushes guided us in a few minutes to the spot where the elephant lay dead, at about three hundred yards' distance. The whole day passed in flaying the two animals and cutting off the flesh, which was packed in large gum sacks, with which the camels were loaded. I was curious to examine the effect of the half-pound shell. It had entered the flank on the right side, breaking the rib upon which it had exploded; it had then passed through the stomach and the lower portion of the lungs, both of which were terribly shattered; and breaking one of the fore-ribs on the left side, it had lodged beneath the skin of the shoulder. This was irresistible work, and the elephant had evidently dropped in a few minutes after having received the shell.

A most interesting fact had occurred. I noticed an old wound unhealed and full of matter in the front of the left shoulder. The bowels were shot through, and were green in various places. Florian suggested that it must be an elephant that I had wounded at Wat el Negur; we tracked the course of the bullet most carefully, until we at length discovered my unmistakable bullet of quicksilver and lead, almost uninjured, in the fleshy part of the thigh, imbedded in an unhealed wound. Thus, by a curious chance, upon my first interview with African elephants by daylight, I had killed the identical elephant that I had wounded at Wat el Negur forty-three days before in the dhurra plantation, twenty-eight miles distant!

CHAPTER VII

The start from Geera—Feats of horsemanship—A curious chase—Abou Do wins a race—Capturing a young buffalo—Our island camp—Tales of the Base.

We started from Geera on the 23d of December, with our party complete. The Hamran sword-hunters were Abou Do, Jali, and Suleiman. My chief tracker was Taher Noor, who, although a good hunter, was not a professional *aggahr*, and I was accompanied by the father of Abou Do, who was a renowned "howarti" or harpooner of hippopotami. This magnificent old man might have been Neptune himself. He stood about six feet two, and his grizzled locks hung upon his shoulders in thick, and massive curls, while his deep bronze features could not have been excelled in beauty of outline. A more classical figure I have never beheld than the old Abou Do with his harpoon as he first breasted the torrent, and then landed dripping from the waves to join our party from the Arab camp on the opposite side of the river. In addition to my Tokrooris, I had engaged nine camels, each with a separate driver, of the Hamrans, who were to accompany us throughout the expedition. These people were glad to engage themselves, with their camels included, at one and a half dollars per month, for man and beast as one. We had not sufficient baggage to load five camels, but four carried a large supply of corn for our horses and people.

Hardly were we mounted and fairly started than the monkey-like agility of our *aggageers* was displayed in a variety of antics, that were far more suited to performances in a circus than to a party of steady and experienced hunters, who wished to reserve the strength of their horses for a trying journey.

Abou Do was mounted on a beautiful Abyssinian horse, a gray; Suleiman rode a rough and inferior-looking beast; while little Jali, who was the pet of the party, rode a gray snare, not exceeding fourteen hands in height, which matched her rider exactly in fire, spirit, and speed. Never was there a more perfect picture of a wild Arab horseman than Jali on his mare. Hardly was he in the saddle than away flew the mare over the loose shingles that formed the dry bed of the river, scattering the rounded pebbles in the air from her flinty Hoofs, while her rider in the vigour of delight threw himself almost under her belly while at full speed, and picked up stones from the ground, which he flung, and again caught as they descended. Never were there more complete Centaurs than these Hamran Arabs; the horse and man appeared to be one animal, and that of the most elastic nature, that could twist and turn with the suppleness of a snake. The fact of their being separate beings was well proved, however, by the rider's springing to the earth with his drawn sword while the horse was in full gallop over rough and difficult ground, and, clutching the mane, again vaulting into the saddle with the ability of a monkey, without once checking the speed. The fact of being on horseback had suddenly altered the character of these Arabs; from a sedate and proud bearing, they had become the wildest examples of the most savage disciples of Nimrod. Excited by enthusiasm, they shook their naked blades aloft till the steel trembled in their grasp, and away they dashed over rocks, through thorny bush, across ravines, up and down steep inclinations, engaging in a mimic hunt, and going through the various acts supposed to occur in the attack of a furious elephant. I must acknowledge that, in spite of my admiration for their wonderful dexterity, I began to doubt their prudence. I had three excellent horses for my wife and myself; the Hamran hunters had only one for each, and if the commencement were an example of their usual style of horsemanship, I felt sure that a dozen horses would not be sufficient for the work before us. However, it was not the moment to offer advice, as they were simply mad with excitement and delight.

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